

Minutes of March Meeting of Allentown EAC

A meeting of the Allentown EAC was held on March 9, 2015 starting at 5:15 p.m. in the 3rd floor conference room at City Hall.

EAC Members Present: Tinku Khanwalkar, Randy Fey, Joe Hoffman, Scott Burnet, Carolyn Albright

Non-EAC Members Present: Lee Vedder

- The minutes of the February EAC meeting were duly **APPROVED**.

REPORTS FROM EAC LIAISONS

- Joe Hoffman reported on his February 19th meeting with Vicky Kistler. A detailed report of the meeting was sent to EAC members on February 23rd.
 - The meeting was a valuable way for the EAC to be informed of various initiatives currently underway. Although none of those initiatives require immediate EAC involvement, the EAC can definitely support environmentally beneficial initiatives by providing advocacy at public meetings, writing letters of support and supporting educational initiatives.
 - The EAC may consider advocating for the proper environmental considerations in the development of the Jordan Park playground and may help to bring community support for such environmentally beneficial actions. Joe Hoffman agreed to take the lead for the EAC to provide input to the design and development plans for the playground.
 - EAC input may also be helpful on City plans with respect to swimming pools. Joe Hoffman agreed to bring any such plans to the EAC for discussion.
- There was a discussion of additional liaison opportunities with the City. Joe Hoffman moved that Tinku Khanwalkar be the liaison for City Council. The motion was seconded by Scott Burnet and **APPROVED**.
- Scott Burnet had no report on liaison activities with Friends of the Allentown Parks.
- Rich Niesenbaum reported that he will be attending the first meeting of the Planning Commission the next day and will provide a report at the next EAC meeting.
- Randy Fey had no report on the Allentown Public Works Department because he has not yet been able to meet with Craig Messinger. He hopes to do so before the next EAC meeting.
- The EAC discussed the letter received by the EAC members from Matthew Linda regarding WSI's solid waste technology. After discussion, Rich moved that Tinku Khanwalkar send a letter to Matthew Linda informing him that it would not be appropriate for the EAC to be involved prior to any involvement by the Mayor or City Council. The motion was seconded by Carolyn Albright and **APPROVED**.

- The EAC then discussed the need for EAC members to be aware of regional developments. Tinku Khanwalkar moved that Joe Hoffman and Randy Fey jointly check out web sites and meetings addressing regional developments (such as RenewLV, LV Planning Commission, etc.) and report back to the EAC. The motion was seconded by Scott Burnet and **APPROVED**.
 - The Mayor suggested that all the research being done by the EAC should be submitted to him. He agreed to attend a future EAC meeting this summer to hear presentations by EAC members on the topics they have researched and to hold a dialog about them. The EAC will need to decide when it might be ready for such a meeting and then coordinate with the Mayor
 - An annual EAC presentation for new parks employees was discussed. Another option would be an EAC stewardship statement or letter that could be inserted into the orientation materials for all City employees. This needs further discussion at the EAC.
 - An annual EAC event was discussed. The Mayor suggested checking with Touchstone Theater for possible ideas.
- Randy Fey agreed to draft a potential green roof policy for EAC consideration at the April meeting.
- Tinku Khanwalkar moved that at the April EAC meeting, Randy Fey should present a draft EAC statement on environmental stewardship for the EAC liaisons to discuss with the City department heads. Joe Hoffman seconded and the motion was **APPROVED**.
- Randy Fey suggested that Tinku Khanwalkar should introduce herself and present the EAC's vision and activities to City Council so as to open lines of communication with them. Tinku agreed to look into doing so.
- There was a discussion about an annual EAC event that would help with outreach on environmental stewardship. Tinku agreed to check with Julie Thomases on whether there will be a Sustain-a-ball this year. If not, Lee Vedder agreed to look into an artistic/environmental event to be held possibly in conjunction with some other event. Joe Hoffman agreed to look into whether there is a Valley-wide event that may serve the purpose.
- With respect to EAC support on urban gardening, Joe Hoffman reported that the EAC could help find residents willing to be the first ones to implement the urban gardens. Ten residential properties are needed. Joe offered to help find them.
- Tinku moved to include the Pennsylvania Audubon Bird Town newsletter on the EAC web site as Allentown is a Bird Town. The motion was seconded by Joe and **APPROVED**.

OUTREACH/RESEARCH ON INITIATIVES

- **Stormwater** – Joe Hoffman reported that he has not been able to reach Mr. Holtzman yet. He plans to do so and report back at the next EAC meeting. Tinku Khanwalkar reported on the stormwater-related educational efforts being undertaken by the Lehigh Valley Bird Town Coalition and suggested greater EAC involvement with that group.
- Randy Fey suggested that the Allentown EAC could create a list of good websites and information on webinars related to the initiatives that the EAC is supporting. Further discussion is needed on who will lead this effort.
- **Urban Gardening** – Rich Niesenbaum reported that he is participating in the Jordan Heights Program as part of his capacity as a faculty member at Muhlenberg and he will report back to the EAC on that. Joe Hoffman agreed that he will be helping to identify 10 properties for the urban gardening initiative by Rodale. There is a possibility that Franklin Park may have a garden.
- **Native Plants** -- The EAC discussed whether to recommend a native plant ordinance for the City of Allentown similar to the Lower Makefield Township Ordinance No. 368. Randy Fey pointed out that an ordinance requiring native plants may not be wise because foreign pests can decimate native species and more variety is desirable so long as the plants are not invasive. The better approach may be to ban invasive plants. Joe Hoffman offered to discuss this further with the Parks Department before the EAC takes further action on this idea. Tinku Khanwalkar also brought up the North Carolina Local Roots Program but suggested that the EAC look into this approach later.
- **Plastic Bag Bags and Styrofoam** -- The EAC discussed the challenge to such ordinances underway in California and decided to wait and see what happens there before taking further action on this. Scott Burnet noted that the City could at least pick up plastic bags and Styrofoam as part of the City's curbside pick-up service. Tinku Khanwalkar pointed out that this might require renegotiation of the contract with Waste Management. Scott Burnet offered to look into this further.
- **Green Roof Policy** – Randy Fey confirmed that he will propose wording for a policy at the next EAC meeting.
- The EAC discussed the idea of giving presentations to the Mayor on the initiatives that EAC members have researched or been involved in. The EAC concluded that the July meeting may be the best one to invite the Mayor to attend. Tinku Khanwalkar offered to see if this could be put on the Mayor's calendar.
- The EAC discussed the concept of a letter on environmental stewardship that could be provided to the City's Department heads. Randy offered to bring a draft for review at the next EAC meeting.
- Following a discussion on whether to hold an annual event, Randy Fey moved that the EAC should support and be present at appropriate events but should have no separate event of its own. Carolyn Albright seconded the motion and it was **APPROVED**.

The meeting was duly adjourned at 6:44 p.m.